At a Court holden at the Hoſpital of Bridewell, *on* Thurſday *the* 16*th. of* Auguſt, 1694. *being Election-Day.*

Ordered,

THat the Thanks of This Court be given to Mr. *Atterbury* for his Sermon on This Day, preach'd in the Chapel of This Hoſpital; and that He be Deſired to Print the ſame.

J. MOUNT.

At a Court holden at the Hoſpital of Bridewell, *on* Thurſday *the* 16*th. of* Auguſt, 1694. *being Election-Day.*

Ordered,

THat the Thanks of This Court be given to Mr. *Atterbury* for his Sermon on This Day, preach'd in the Chapel of This Hoſpital; and that He be Deſired to Print the ſame.

J. MOUNT.

The Power of Charity to Cover Sin.

A SERMON

Preach'd before the

President and Governors

OF

Bridewell and *Bethlehem*,

IN

BRIDEWELL-CHAPEL,

August xvi. 1694.

Being the *ELECTION-DAY*.

By *FRANCIS ATTERBURY*, Student of *Christ-Church*, and Chaplain in Ordinary to Their MAJESTIES.

LONDON,

Printed by *Tho. Warren*, for *Thomas Bennet*, at the Half-Moon in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard,

MDCXCIV.

The Power of Charity to cover Sin.

A

SERMON

Preach'd at

BRIDEWELL-CHAPEL.

Auguſt 16th. 1694.

1 St. PETER iv. viii.

Charity ſhall cover a multitude of Sins.

GOD be thanked, the frequent Returns of ſuch Pious Meetings as Theſe in this Rich and Charitable *CITY*, have made the *General Argument* of *CHARITY*, its Nature, and Chief Properties, its ſeveral Grounds and Reaſons, ſo well underſtood, that to Entertain You with a *Diſcourſe* at Large, on That *Subject*, would be a very needleſs and uſeleſs Attempt. So many *Eminent Pens* have gone before in This Way, as have left it very difficult for thoſe who come after, either to ſay any thing which They *have not* ſaid, or not to ſay That much worſe which They *have*.

Upon This Account; and becauſe indeed I take *General Diſcourſes*, for the moſt part, to be like Large Proſpects, where the Eye is loſt by the wide Compaſs it takes, and ſees ſo many Things at once, that it ſees nothing diſtinctly; I have choſen at preſent to point Your Thoughts onely on One Particular Property of This Great Vertue, which has been not often handled, I think; and even Then, not always well underſtood: It is That which the *Apoſtle* St. *Peter* propoſes to Us in Thoſe Few Words I have read to You,—— *Charity ſhall cover a multitude of Sins.*

Few as They are, They will ſufficiently employ our Thoughts at This Time, if we conſider in the *Firſt* place, the ſeveral Senſes that have been given of 'em, and ſatisfie our ſelves, *which* of Theſe it is that ought to be taken: If, *Secondly*, We free That One True Genuine Meaning of the Words from the Exceptions that lye againſt it. If, *Thirdly*, We eſtabliſh the Truth laid down upon its Proper Grounds and Reaſons. And if, *Laſtly*, We make ſome few uſeful Deductions from it. After this is done, the Little Time that is left will properly be ſpent in Applying what has been ſaid more immediately to the Occaſion of This Preſent Aſſembly.

I. Charity ſhall cover a multitude of Sins.

There is ſcarce Any man, I believe, who hears Theſe Words, that is not ready to frame to Himſelf This Senſe of 'em; "That the Vertue of *Charity* is of ſo great Worth "in the Sight of God, that Thoſe Perſons who poſſeſs and "exerciſe it in any Eminent manner, are peculiarly Enti-"tuled to the Divine Favour and Pardon, with regard to "numberleſs Slips and Failings in Their Duty, which "They may be Otherwiſe guilty of. This Great Chriſti-"an Perfection, of which They are Maſters, ſhall make "many Little Imperfections to be over-look'd and unob-"ſerv'd; it ſhall *Cover a multitude of Sins.*

This,

This, I ſay, is the Account, which every man naturally gives himſelf of Theſe Words, upon the Firſt Hearing 'em; and it is for That very Reaſon probable, that This is the True and Genuine Account of 'em. For, ſuppoſing the *Original Text* to be well and clearly render'd in Our *Verſion*, It will, I am of opinion, be generally found, that That Senſe of any Paſſage, which, after attending to the Force of the Words, and to their Coherence with what goes before, and what follows, Firſt occurs to the Mind, is by much the Juſteſt and Trueſt.

This has not however been always thought a Good Rule in the preſent Caſe. For ſeveral *Pious* and ſome *Judicious* men, finding the Words, in their plain and familiar meaning, to carry ſomewhat a ſuſpicious ſound with 'em, and to border a little (as They Thought) on the *Roman Catholic Doctrine* of *Works Meritorious*, have therefore taken ſome Pains to give a Different Interpretation of 'em.

I ſhall Offer Firſt to Your View Theſe miſtaken Senſes, ere I come to That which I think we ſhould rely upon; becauſe They certainly propoſe Clear and Appoſite Truths to us, tho' perhaps not Truly ariſing from the *Paſſage* now before Us.

Firſt then, the Words have been underſtood to contain an Account of that Particular Inſtance of *Charity*, which we call *Good-Nature*: by which we paſs by little Slights and Injuries, interpret Things to the Beſt Senſe, are not apt to Take or Return an Affront, not forward to Publiſh or Believe an ill Report of any One: by which we turn our Eyes always toward the Beſt ſide of a man, and chooſe rather to look on his Vertues, than his Failures; and by which we conſtantly interpoſe our Good Offices, where-ever we Think They may be Serviceable, either to the compoſing Old Differences, or Preventing New Ones. And This Senſe is grounded upon a ſuppos'd Relation there is between Theſe Words

Words in St. *Peter*, and Thoſe in the *Proverbs*; *Hate ſtirreth up ſtrife, but Love covereth all Sins.*

Now, tho' indeed, in *Our Tranſlation*, and in the *Original Hebrew*, as it Now ſtands, there is ſome Similitude between theſe Two Paſſages, yet in the *Septuagint-Verſion*, (from whence the *Apoſtles* uſually Quoted) they are not ſo Like, as to make it probable that the One ought to be Expounded by the Other.

To ſtrengthen which Criticiſm, we may obſerve, that This Senſe of the Words is by no means *Full* enough to bear the Weight of that *Solemn Preface* with which the *Apoſtle* introduces 'em: *But above all things* (ſays He, in the Words immediately before the *Text*) *have fervent Charity among your ſelves: for Charity ſhall cover a multitude of Sins.* If they were *above all things* to have *Fervent Charity* among themſelves, it could not be for *This Reaſon* alone, *becauſe Charity* would render 'em inoffenſive towards Others, and not eaſie to be offended Themſelves. For tho' This be a very good Degree of *Vertue*, and very fit to be enjoyn'd, becauſe not frequently practis'd; yet can it not deſerve that *peculiar Emphaſis* and *Streſs* that is here laid upon it. Eſpecially, if we conſider it as ſucceeding the mention of thoſe more important and neceſſary Duties to which the *Apoſtle* exhorts 'em in the preceding Verſe, the *being ſober, and watching unto Prayer: Above* all which, it cannot be ſuppos'd, that the Duty of converſing with one another according to the Rules of *Humanity* and *Good-Nature* ſhould be enjoyn'd.

The Words therefore have, in the *ſecond* place, been thus alſo interpreted. *Charity ſhall cover a multitude of Sins*, i. e. ſays the excellent *Grotius*; it will have a mighty Influence in reclaiming Sinners from the Errour of their Ways; the Conſequence of which is, That the Sins of Men thus reclaim'd are pardon'd or cover'd. Charity, which is an exalted Love of God and our Neighbour, will make us induſtrious

ſtrious in procuring Glory to the One, by the Salvation of the Other. It will create a mighty Zeal for the Intereſts of Vertue, and the Honour of the Goſpel, and the Good of Souls; and it will run through all the Difficulties that lie in the way towards ſo good an End, with Readineſs and Pleaſure. It will not be frighten'd from making Attempts even on Thoſe of the firſt Rank in Wickedneſs, the Worſt and moſt Hardned of Men, becauſe it knows that *Their* Revolt from Sin to Vertue (if it can be compaſs'd) will be of mighty Conſequence to Religion, and will probably draw whole Troops of Common Sinners along with it: The Senſe They have of their Own Sins being cover'd, will make *Them* alſo eager, in their Turn, to cover thoſe of Other Men.

This is a very Good and Pious Senſe of the Words, but (I believe it will be allowed me) no very Eaſie and Natural One: They muſt be rack'd before they can be brought to confeſs This Meaning. However it was what That Judicious Perſon was led into by a Former Explication He had made of a Parallel Place in St. *James*; which I ſhall crave leave to produce at length, and to comment upon, becauſe I take it to be the *Key* of the Text, which eaſily and readily lets us into its True Meaning.

Brethren (ſays St. *James* at the Concluſion of his Epiſtle) *if any One of You do Err from the Truth, and One Convert him, let him know, that he which converteth a Sinner from the Errour of his ways, ſhall ſave a Soul from Death, and ſhall hide a Multitude of Sins.* He intended to ſhut up his Epiſtle with recommending to 'em One of the moſt important and uſeful Vertues, That of endeavouring the Converſion and Reformation of Men. And He intended alſo to ſtir 'em up to the Exerciſe of That Vertue by the moſt powerful Motives he could think of: What are They? Why firſt, That *He who converteth a Sinner from the Errour of his way*, ſhould conſider that he ſaveth a Soul from Death; and then, ſe-

condly, and chiefly, That he *ſhall* [alſo] *cover a multitude of Sins.* Whoſe Sins? What thoſe of the Converted Perſons? Nay, but *That* is already expreſs'd, and much more than that in the foregoing Motive, *He ſhall ſave a Soul from Death:* for ſurely the ſaving a Soul from Death, neceſſarily includes and preſuppoſes the Remiſſion of its Sins. It muſt then be meant, of His Sins who makes, and not of His who becomes the Convert: And Thus indeed, this Laſt Clauſe carries a New Motive in it, diſtinct from That of the Former; and ſuch an One as riſes above it, and touches thoſe more nearly to whom it is addreſs'd; and was therefore fit to be propos'd in the Laſt place, and to be left as a ſting in the Minds of Thoſe to whom the Epiſtle was written. As if he had ſaid at length, "Let Him know, that He ſhall, by "This Means, not *onely* ſave a Soul from Death, (though "This it ſelf be a very Great and Deſirable Thing) but ſhall "alſo (which more nearly concerns him) ſecure to him-"ſelf on this account the Pardon of many Sins.

Now the Words here of St. *James* are exactly the ſame with Thoſe of St. *Peter* in my Text; and the Occaſion upon which They are introduc'd, and their Dependence on the Context is much the ſame in both Places; except only that They are uſed in my Text as a Motive to Charity in general, but in St. *James*, with regard only to One main and eminent Branch of it, the Converſion of Souls: What therefore St. *James* means by 'em, is meant alſo by St. *Peter:* and therefore That moſt Obvious and Eaſie Senſe, which I mention'd at the Entrance on This Diſcourſe, is, in all probability, the Trueſt: And, as ſuch, I ſhall take the Liberty here once again to repeat it. It is This,

"That the Vertue of Charity is of ſo great Value in "the ſight of God, that They who poſſeſs and exerciſe it "in any Eminent Manner, are peculiarly entit'led to the "Divine Favour and Pardon, with regard to numberleſs "Slips and Failings in Their Duty, which They may be

"Otherwiſe

" Otherwiſe guilty of. This great Chriſtian Perfection of " which They are Maſters, ſhall make many Little Im- " perfections to be over-look'd and unobſerv'd: It *ſhall co-* " *ver a multitude of Sins.*

I fear I have been tedious in ſetling the *Senſe of the Words:* but it was no more than was requiſite, in ſo important a Point, ſo little inſiſted on from the *Pulpit*; and which may be thought liable to ſome Juſt *Exceptions.*

II. *Theſe* I am now in the *ſecond Place* to propoſe, and ſhall endeavour to remove. The Doing of which will give me an Occaſion of clearing the *Senſe*, and limiting the *Bounds* of this *Truth* more exactly and fully.

The *Great Exception* againſt This way of Expounding the *Text*, is, that it gives too great a Colour to the *Roman Catholic Doctrines* of *Merit* and *Supererogation*; and ſeems to leſſen the Worth of That Onely True and Proper Satiſfaction for *Sin* made by our *Saviour* on the *Croſs.* For, at This Rate, what need of *Remiſſion* of Sin in every Caſe by *the Blood of Chriſt*, ſince We our ſelves are in Good Meaſure capable of making the *Atonement?* We, who have it, it ſeems, in our power, by the Exerciſe of a Particular *Vertue* to ſecure a *Pardon* to our ſelves for Neglecting all the Reſt; and can blot out the *Remembrance* of an *Ill-ſpent Life*, by a few *Acts of Charity* at the Cloſe of it. As if *God* were ſo much beholden to us for our *Good Deeds*, as to be bound for Their ſakes to forgive us our Ill Ones! Or, as if the Performance of Our Duty in One Caſe, could make any manner of Amends to Him for our Non-performance of it in Another! This, *ſay They*, is very Eaſie and Comfortable *Divinity!*

To take off the Force of *This Objection*, it will be requiſite to conſider theſe *Two* or *Three* ſeveral Things.

Firſt, We muſt Explain our ſelves a little more particularly, what we mean by that *Charity*, to which the Promiſe

of the *Text* is made; What it is in the *Nature* and *Extent*, and what in the *Intention* and *Degree* of it.

As to its *Nature* and *Extent*, it muſt be underſtood to ſignifie not barely *Acts of Relief* to the *Poor* and *Needy*, as the Vulgar and Confin'd Uſe of the Word imports; but more largely, all the ſeveral ways of *Univerſal Beneficence* and *Kindneſs*, by which one Man can be ſerviceable to another. Further, it expreſſes not the *Outward Material Act* onely, but muſt be ſuppos'd to take in alſo, the *Vital Form* of it, that *Inward Principle* of a *Sincere Love* towards *God* and *Man*, from whence it regularly flows, and ſeparated from which, the meer external Act is a Lifeleſs and Uſeleſs Performance. And Then, even of *Charity* thus Largely underſtood, it is *not a Common Degree* that is meant here; 'Tis to a *Fervent Charity*, to a *mighty* and *extraordinary meaſure* of it, that this *mighty* and *extraordinary Bleſſing* belongs.

Secondly, Even of *Charity* thus Qualify'd; it is not ſaid, *That it ſhall cover a multitude of Sins*, how Groſs and Hainous ſoever; The Words of the *Text* do by no means carry us to aſſert thus much concerning it: but only (as You have heard 'em Explain'd to You) ſeem to ſay, that it ſhall be our Excuſe for many Leſſer Neglects and Failings in our Duty, many Sins of Infirmity, Surprize, and Daily Incurſion: In a word, for ſuch Offences onely, as are conſiſtent with a ſtate of *True Charity*; and ſure Thoſe cannot be very Groſs and Preſumptuous Ones. For He, who lives in the Perfect Exerciſe of that *Fervent Charity*, which the *Text* ſpeaks of, abounding Inwardly and Outwardly in all the various Inſtances and Expreſſions of it, and in thoſe ſeveral *Vertues* and *Graces* which do naturally and neceſſarily attend it: I ſay, who ever he is, that is throughly poſſeſt and acted by this *Divine Principle of Love*, he cannot be ſuppos'd capable of the Groſſeſt Commiſſions, *while* he is under the Guidance of it: And as for Thoſe, he had fallen into *before* the attainment of this Gift, They were certainly remitted

mitted alſo and cover'd *before* the attainment of it; elſe, doubtleſs, he had never attained it. So that no *Great Guilt* of any kind can well be thought to harbour in that Breaſt, where *true Charity* dwells.

Indeed, it is not univerſally certain, that when-ever God remits the *Guilt* of Sin, he remits the *Puniſhment* too, (The *Temporal Puniſhment*, I mean) For Wicked Men, upon their Return to *Vertue*, do not ſeldom find, to their Coſt, that a Sin may be pardon'd, and yet all the Ill Conſequences of it not prevented; and can therefore often trace the Steps of their Former Miſdoings, in the ſeveral Evils of Life that afterward befall 'em. And in This Senſe therefore it may be, and is probably true, that Charity ſhall cover many Sins, even of the firſt Magnitude; *i.e.* it ſhall prevent the Temporal Inflictions due to 'em, and often, even after Pardon obtain'd, following upon 'em: But it properly removes the *Guilt* onely of thoſe Frailties and Infirmities of a leſſer ſize, which can be thought conſiſtent with a ſtate of Charity. And therefore to except againſt the Doctrine laid down, as encouraging the Charitable Man to expect Remiſſion of all manner of Sins, how great and how numerous ſoever, is to load it with a Difficulty which does not, and cannot belong to it. But

Thirdly, Even as to Theſe ſlighter Omiſſions and Failings, it is not pretended, that They are done away by Acts of Mercy and Charity in any ſenſe, but what includes the Application of the Merits of our Saviour's Blood, the onely Fountain of Satisfaction for all Kind of Sins, for the Leaſt as well as the Greateſt. It is True indeed, that the Blood of Chriſt is that alone which expiates Sin: But This hinders not, but that God may make ſuch and ſuch Acts of Ours the *Conditions* and *Grounds* (as it were) of applying the Virtue of that Blood to us. And Thus Our Good Works, tho' they are not the *Meritorious*, yet may they become, if I may ſo ſpeak, the *Occaſional* Cauſe of Pardon and

and Grace to us. And if This be eſtabliſhing the *R. C.* Doctrine of Salvation by Works, then has our Saviour Himſelf, I fear, eſtabliſht it, in that Divine Form of Prayer, in which he has taught us to ſay, *Forgive Us Our Treſpaſſes, as We forgive Thoſe that Treſpaſs againſt Us.* *As* We forgive Thoſe! i. e. *Inaſmuch as*, on That very account (among Others) *becauſe* we forgive Thoſe that treſpaſs againſt Us. Where we ſee the Exerciſe of One Great Inſtance of Charity, Forgiveneſs of Enemies, is made the Ground of our asking and expecting Forgiveneſs from God.

Fourthly and *Laſtly*, It follows not, that becauſe ſo Vaſt a Recompence is promis'd to a Fervent Charity, that therefore the Exerciſe of it is in the way of *Supererogation*, ſo that we might have let it alone without Fault or Blame. We may be ſtrictly, and by the very Letter of the Law, oblig'd to it; and yet it may include ſo high a pitch and perfection of Vertue, and one ſo ſeldom attain'd, that God may think fit, where-ever it is attain'd, mightily to reward it; and to encourage us in doing our Duty in ſome One Great Point, by an aſſurance, that in many ſmaller Ones he will not be *Extream to mark what is done amiſs* by us. Our Gracious Maſter deals with Us in This Caſe, as a Man oftentimes does with his Servant; If he be Truſty and Faithful to him in a Buſineſs of Great Concern and Moment, (tho' it be but his *Duty* to be ſo) yet ſhall That piece of Eminent Service excuſe a Thouſand Neglects and Failings upon Other Occaſions.

There is yet a *Second Objection*, tho' indeed ſo *ſlight* an One, as, after the Former has been remov'd, is ſcarce worth mentioning. It is taken from that Saying of our Saviour's, That They *will* Love much, to whom much *has been* forgiven.--- Juſt *contrary* to which the *Text* as expounded by Us, ſeems to ſay, That They who *do* love much, *ſhall* have much Forgiven 'em. But Theſe Two Truths are eaſily reconcil'd. For it is not hard to underſtand, How That, which

is

is the *Cauſe* of a Thing in One Reſpect, may be the *Effect* of it in another. And accordingly it may be very true, that He who is Forgiven much, will, for that very reaſon, Love much: And it may be *as* True, that He who thus Loveth much, becauſe much hath been Forgiven him, ſhall, on that very account, have much more Forgiven him. 'Tis juſt the ſame Caſe as between Me and My Friend. I may paſſionately love him, becauſe he has pardon'd me the Great and Many Injuries I formerly did him, while we were at Enmity: And again, the Knowledge he has of my Love may incline him to paſs over any Future Injuries I may happen to do him.

III. The Doctrine being thus fix'd at Large, and freed from Exception, I go on, as I propos'd, in the *Third* place, to enquire into the Grounds and Reaſons of this Wondrous Efficacy, ſo particularly attributed to the Exerciſe of Charity: For we read not that God has annexed this Promiſe to any Other Grace or Vertue of the Chriſtian Life whatſoever, but to This onely, That it *ſhall cover Sin*; Of which Theſe ſeveral Accounts may with ſome Probability be given.

Firſt, That This was really a Fitter and Properer Return to be made to Charity, than to any Other Vertue; becauſe it adjuſts and proportions the Reward of Acting to the Act it ſelf; and makes the Duty of Man towards God, and the Bleſſing of God upon the Performance of That Duty, to have a near Relation and Reſemblance to One another. I explain my ſelf Thus---- The Chief Employment, the higheſt Point and Perfection of Charity is, to paſs by the Offences and Injuries of Men; to pardon the Malice of our Enemies, and the Ingratitude of our Friends. To Him therefore that attains to this Heighth of Vertue, God has very *aptly* and *ſuitably* promis'd, that his Faults and Offences too ſhall be pardon'd: As he deals with his Neighbour, ſo will God deal with Him: Mercy ſhall be ſhew'd upon Him,

Him, who ſhews Mercy: If we forgive Other Men Their Treſpaſſes, then will our Heavenly Father forgive Us Our Treſpaſſes alſo.

There is, You ſee, here a ſtrict Analogy betwixt the Reward annex'd, and one Great Inſtance of the Vertue enjoyn'd: which is God's Method of putting us in Mind of what we are to Doe, by his Promiſes as well as his Commands; and of exciting Us to endeavour after a Perfection, not eaſily attain'd, by aſſuring Us, that the Exerciſe of it, ſhall, in the very ſame kind, return doubly and trebly into our Own Boſome.

But, *Secondly*, the Good and Charitable Man is peculiarly entit'led to the Pardon of many Sins, becauſe he is in a peculiar manner liable to incurr the Guilt of many: either from that *Natural Frame and Make* of his Mind, that diſpoſes him to this Vertue; or from the very *Exerciſe* of the Vertue it ſelf. Charity is grafted always on Good-Nature, and a Sweetneſs of Diſpoſition: which though it be a Temper of Mind very lovely and deſireable; yet is it ſuch an One, as in the Circumſtances of our preſent Imperfect State has its Infirmities; and is what makes Converſation dangerous to us in a World where we are ſurrounded with Temptations. It hinders us from arming our ſelves with that obſtinate Reſolution of Mind, that ſtubborn incomplying Vertue, which is requiſite to preſerve a Man undefiled and blameleſs. It makes Us eaſie and yielding to Common Cuſtomes, and Receiv'd Opinions; Ready to comply with a Thouſand things (of which we are not exactly well ſatisfied) upon the pure ſcore of good Nature, and becauſe we cannot allow our ſelves to be troubleſome. And being found and known to be of this Eaſie and Complying Temper, This very thing will invite Ill Spirits, and Ill Men, to make their Attempts upon us.

And then the *Exerciſe* of the Vertue it ſelf, eſpecially where the Principle of it is ſtrong, lays us open to ſeveral Failings.

Failings. It makes us omit oftentimes the Duties incumbent on us from our Profeſſions and Callings; and perhaps neglect to take care of Thoſe, whom it is the Firſt Point of Charity to take care of, our Children and Families. It warms us with ſuch a Zeal for doing Good, as breaks out ſometimes into Acts, not reconcileable to the Rules of Diſcretion, Decency, and Right Reaſon; and which do real Diſ-ſervice to the Cauſe of God, inſtead of promoting the Honour of it. St. *Francis*'s Charity went a little too far, when it employ'd it ſelf upon Birds and Beaſts; the Vertue was not at all beholden to him for being ſhew'd in ſuch a Dreſs, as, inſtead of rendring it deſireable in the Eyes of Men, made it look ridiculous. Indeed *Love* (the Spring Head of Charity) as it is the ſweeteſt of All Paſſions, ſo is it One of the ſtrongeſt too; and, if it have the Reins but once given to it, will go near to run away with its Rider: That is, If a Due Care be not taken of it, it will exalt our Fancy ſo high, and diſorder it ſo much, as to put it out of the Reach and Rule of the Governing Powers of the Mind. And then what wild Work does there follow upon it! Inſtead of Wiſe and Rational Ways of Beneficence, fooliſh Undertakings and unpracticable Deſigns! Inſtead of a manly and ſober Form of Devotion, all the Extravagant Rants and ſilly Freaks of Enthuſiaſm! Witneſs the Lives of many a Good Saint to whom the Church of *Rome* has allowed a place in her Calendar. Finally, the Charitable Man, who Loves every thing, does not fail ſometimes to Love his own Vertue too; I mean, that he is apt to over-rate the juſt Price of it, and too much to undervalue every thing elſe in compariſon of it. A Man may be ſo much ſtruck with the Beauty and Excellence of *Charity*, as to forget, that Faith alſo is a Vertue as well as That, and thereupon to make ſhipwrack of it. Thus, I ſay, the Good and Merciful Man being particularly diſpos'd toward ſome Infirmities, is a particularity comforted with a Gracious Aſſurance of their Pardon.

Thirdly, God ſeems on purpoſe to have plac'd this Mark of Diſtinction upon Charity, to ſhew, us how tender and careful He is of *Our* Welfare; what Bowels of Love and Compaſſion he has for Us: Since That is His Favourite Vertue, the Vertue he chiefly delights in, and delights to reward, the Exerciſe of which is moſt ſweet and comfortable, moſt uſeful and advantageous to the Sons of Men. He deſign'd by This Convincing Inſtance of his Goodneſs to prove to us, that he was not an hard and rigorous Maſter, that enjoyn'd us Commands, for his *Own* ſake, and purely for the pleaſure of being *Obey'd*; but that his great Intention was to twiſt our Duty and our Happineſs together: And therefore by how much more our Eaſe and Happineſs was concern'd in the Practice of One Vertue than of that of another, ſo much ſtronger Tyes and Engagements to it was he reſolv'd to lay upon us.

Fourthly, Charity is particularly available to procure a Remiſſion of the Guilt of Sin, and a Relaxation of the Puniſhment due to it: becauſe it particularly engages the Prayers of all Good Men, in our Behalf; and of all Thoſe Perſons to whom the Inſtances of our Goodneſs extend. A Kind and Beneficent Man, as He is a Common Bleſſing to Every Body, ſo is He bleſt in Common by Every One that knows him: All Men are ready to Implore the Mercies of God, Spiritual and Temporal, upon the Merciful-minded; eſpecially the Poor and Miſerable, (whoſe Prayers God has in a particular manner promis'd to hear) are conſtant and earneſt Interceſſors at the Throne of Grace for him. So that, whereas the Poſſeſſors of other Vertues ſtand chiefly upon Their Own Bottom for the obtaining Pardon and Grace, Every Man almoſt becomes a Supplicant for the Merciful and Liberal: And no wonder therefore if ſuch United Requeſts prevail. But

Fifthly, and principally, God has made This Promiſe to *Charity*, and to no Other Grace of the Chriſtian Life, becauſe it is really the chief and moſt Excellent of Graces: and the moſt

moſt Excellent Thing ought to have the moſt Excellent Reward. It is the firſt Perfection of the Mind, preferable to Faith and Hope, in Dignity, in Uſe, and in the Length of its Duration, as St. *Paul* has taught us to reaſon concerning it. It is call'd the *Great Commandment*, the *End of the Law*, and the *Fulfilling of the Law*: and it *is* really what it is call'd. For where This Divine Grace is enjoy'd in any full and eminent meaſure, there no Moral Attainment of any kind, can be totally wanting. *Charity* is the Queen of *Vertues*, and the Reſt are of Her Retinue and Train, as it were; conſtantly attending on Her, appearing and diſappearing with Her: and well therefore, as a Queen, is ſhe inveſted by God with that Sovereign Prerogative, the Power of Covering Sin. It is Her Nature to be comprehenſive of, and abounding in many Duties; and therefore is it Her Reward alſo to be a Skreen for many Failings. *Charity* is ſaid in Scripture to eſtabliſh a True Friendſhip, and to create a Real Likeneſs between God and Man: God paſſes by the Faults therefore of the Charitable, as a Friend does thoſe of his Friend; and the Great Reſemblance of the Divine Nature, that ſhines out in him, hides all Leſſer Unlikeneſſes, and makes 'em not to be diſcern'd.

'Tis difficult to ſtop on ſo Noble a Subject; and yet more difficult to expreſs ones ſelf becomingly and well: The Tongues of Men and Angels, as they are ſaid to be a Worthleſs Gift, in compariſon of Charity, ſo are They not All able to ſet out Half the Worth and Excellence of it. St. *Paul* has done ſomething towards it, in the XIIIth. of the Iſt. to the *Corinthians*, and to *Him* I refer You.

IV. It remains now that I ſhould make Thoſe Few *Inferences* I intended from the Whole; and then direct All that has been ſaid particularly upon the Occaſion of this Preſent Aſſembly. And

Firſt, The Truth we have been upon ſuggeſts to us One Argument againſt Their Opinion, who hold *Juſtification*, and all the Graces of the Goſpel to be conveyed to us by *Faith*

alone; in *ſuch* a ſenſe as excludes any manner of Regard to be had to our *Works* in it. For if Juſtification be a putting a Man into a ſtate of Favour with God by remiſſion of Sin, and Acts of Charity be Works, then do Works contribute to Juſtification. This Point goes generally for a *Speculative* Nicety, not worth inſiſting upon: But ſure They who think it ſo, have not well conſider'd, what Influence it has experimentally had upon *Practice* and a Good Life, in many of its Aſſertors. Some Spiritual Libertines of the *Antinomian* Way, have by it undermin'd the very Deſign of the Goſpel; and ſet us free from the Neceſſity of being Pious, Juſt, or Good, in any other Principle, but that of pure *Gratitude* onely. And in Thoſe who do not go to theſe Mad Heighths, yet the Perſwaſions They have about Juſtifying Faith, are obſerv'd mightily to leſſen their Eſteem for Good Works: and from eſteeming them leſs, to come to practice 'em leſs, God knows, is a very Eaſie ſtep, and almoſt an unavoidable One! Witneſs the Celebrated *Inſtitutions* of a Great Divine, where *Faith* is the ſolemn Subject of every Page, but *Charity* ſcarce mention'd at all, never inſiſted on: And accordingly as Charity is little mention'd there, ſo are the Rules of it little obſerv'd; which do not, I think, at all conſiſt with a bitter invective way of Writing.

Which leads me to a

Second Inference alſo, That if a Spirit of Charity ſhall cover a multitude of Sins, then may we aſſure our ſelves, that the contrary Temper, a Spirit of Hatred, Malignity, and Ill Will, ſhall cover a multitude of Vertues; *i.e.* They ſhall be no Vertues to Him that has 'em: Neither God nor Man ſhall regard 'em as ſuch, if Charity does not Crown 'em. Charity covers many Sins, becauſe it is ſo noble and ſo excellent a Vertue: What Vertue then beyond this can there be found, of price enough, to cover the Sin of Uncharitableneſs?

Thirdly, From the Promiſe made in the *Text*, We may learn the wondrous Goodneſs and Condeſcention of God.

He

He has a right to all the higheſt Inſtances and Degrees of Vertue that it is poſſible for us to put on; and when we have practis'd 'em to the utmoſt, we have done but what we were ſtrictly oblig'd to do: And yet ſo far he is pleas'd to abate of this Right, as to accept the Performance of One Great Duty in lieu of the Omiſſion of many Others. An Act of Grace and Kindneſs which is enhans'd to Us, by conſidering, that Reaſon never did or could make this known to the Heathen World; although the Goſpel has now Reveal'd it to Us. Nay, remarkable it is, (as I obſerv'd to you before) that this Great Duty, which is to compenſate as it were, for all Our Failings, is the moſt pleaſant and delightful Employment that belongs to us; the moſt agreeable to our Nature, and the moſt uſeful to our Fellow-Creatures. Let us not complain therefore of the ſtrictneſs of the Rule we are to walk by, and of the Hardſhips, which in our Chriſtian Warfare we are to undergo. The Rule is ſtrict indeed,— but then, as Great *Helps* and *Aſſiſtances* are given us to live up to it, ſo great *Abatements* and *Allowances* (we ſee) are made at laſt, if we do not. There are indeed Difficulties to be undergone: But ſure the *Labour of Love* is none of 'em.— That, as it makes a kind of Atonement to God for all the Faults we commit, ſo does it make an Amends to Us for all the Troubles we are at, in every other part of our Duty. It gives an Eaſineſs to that *Yoke*, and a Lightneſs to that *Burthen* which is laid upon us.

Fourthly and *Laſtly*, If the Doctrine laid down be good, then have we in it the plaineſt and moſt quickning Motive in the World to the Exerciſe of this great Duty of *Charity*,— ſuch an One, as exceeds the United Force of all the Arguments that ever were offer'd in this Caſe; and of whoſe Power if a Man can be inſenſible, all Other Motives will doubtleſs be loſt upon him. The wiſe Son of *Syrach* thought he had made a reaſonable Plea for Charity, when he ſaid, *Lay up Thy Treaſure according to the Commandments of the moſt High, and it ſhall bring Thee more Profit than Gold. Shut up Alms*

Alms in thy Storehouſes, and it ſhall deliver Thee from All Affliction, It ſhall fight for Thee againſt Thine Enemies better than a mighty Shield, or a ſtrong Spear. But how Flat, and Cold, and Unmoving is All This, when compar'd with the Life and Energy that is in Thoſe Few Words; —*It ſhall cover a multitude of Sins!*

This Motive indeed has been carry'd too far, and abus'd to ill Purpoſes by Men of another Communion, who, by the Help of it, have made the moſt Impure and Profligate Wretches hope for a General Forgiveneſs of all Their Sins, ſo They were but Liberal enough to the Church in their Wills; and ſetled ſuch a Revenue upon it, as ſhould make a Good Number of Holy Fathers think it worth their while to ſay Daily *Maſſes* for the Soul of the Depatred.

And how *Groſs* a way ſoever This is of Expounding the *Text*, it has prov'd a very *Gainful* One to Thoſe who made uſe of it; For perhaps half the Wealth of the *C.* of *R.* may juſtly be attributed to it. A ſtrong Perſwaſion of the Truth of this Expoſition, ſeems to have been that very Foundation-Stone, on which a very Great Part of Her Charitable Buildings have been Erected.

The Miniſters of the Reform'd Church indeed dare not go ſo far in inviting You to Works of Charity and Mercy: But This They dare, and do affirm,—That a true Principle of Charity, is that Qualification of Mind, which of all Others is moſt grateful and acceptable to God; and ſuch as at the Day of Final Retribution He will have a Particular Regard to, ſo as to make no ſevere Scrutiny into that Man's Faults and Failings, who has Eminently Liv'd and Practis'd by it. And This They Think ſufficiently intimated by Our Saviour's Account of the *Proceſs* of that Day: Where the *Onely Head of Inquiry* he mentions, is, What Good and Charitable Deeds we have done to any of our Poor Brethren: Which implies thus much at leaſt; That *That* will be the *Chief Point* upon which we ſhall be examin'd; and that Our Acquittal as to Neglects in Other Parts of Our Duty, will depend

depend very much upon Our being able to give a good Anſwer to it.

And I hope this Aſſurance it ſelf, is a ſufficient Encouragement to Charity, without Our needing to ſtrain the Words of the Text to ſuch a Groſs Senſe, as no Wiſe Man can believe that they *ought*, and no Good Man would wiſh that they *might* be taken in.

V. There is indeed One Further Senſe of the Words, than has Yet been mention'd; to which they may however be innocently and truly extended. They have been hitherto conſider'd only as containing a Particular Promiſe to Particular Men: They may be underſtood alſo with regard to Thoſe Bleſſings which Publick Charities procure on Publick States and Communities. For it is true alſo, that Acts of Charity ſhall Cover the Sins of Cities and Kingdoms, as well as Thoſe of Private Men, if Cities and Kingdoms unanimouſly agree to perform 'em.

Our *Fathers*, it is to be thought, were of This Opinion; and were powerfully acted and influenc'd by it, in erecting Theſe Charitable Foundations.

They could not but ſee that the Wealth of the Church, though it was really grown too Great, and was by ſome Rich Lazy Orders in it ſcandalouſly employ'd; yet had been retrench'd, on This Account, *beyond* what needed: and had not been apply'd afterwards to any Religious or Publick Uſe; but was ſquander'd away for the moſt part upon Favorites, and upon ſuch as fell in with the Honeſt Zeal of Our Firſt Reformers, not out of any Principle of Conſcience, but the mere Deſign of enriching Themſelves. The Senſe of This, doubtleſs, affected deeply the Good and Pious Men of Thoſe Times; and made them very Earneſt and Active to procure ſome part of Theſe *Church-Spoils* to be ſet aſide to Charitable Uſes: that Retribution, as it were, might, by This Means, be made to God, of what had been torn away in too Large Proportions from his Worſhip and Service: To ſpeak plainly—— that by a True Spirit of Charity

Thoſe

Thoſe Sins might be *Cover'd*, which a Spirit of Luſt and Avarice, under the Pretence of Reforming the Abuſes of Charity, had *caus'd!*

And Theſe Endeavours of Theirs God bleſs'd ſo wonderfully, that ſome Millions of Money were, in a Few Years, contributed towards erecting and endowing in all Parts of our Country, Hoſpitals and Houſes of Charity. This ſufficiently baffled the Calumnies, and ſtopp'd the Mouths of Our Adverſaries of the Church of *Rome*; Who cry'd Us down, as Men that were Reforming away Good Works, and turning all Religion into a Notional Faith. How Other Proteſtant Countries have freed Themſelves from that Imputation I am not able to ſay: ſure I am, Ours deliver'd it ſelf ſo well of it, as to turn the Edge of the Objection back upon the Church of *Rome* it ſelf; that firſt manag'd it againſt us. For upon a Fair and Impartial Computation it appears, that there were Greater Expences upon Publick Works of Charity (ſuch I mean as we are at preſent diſcourſing of) in *Sixty* Years *after* the *Reformation*, than had been in Five times that Number of Years, while *Popery* ſtood: ſome have added, than there were from the *Conqueſt* down to King *Edward the Sixth*; that Good and Excellent Prince, the Great Promoter and Encourager of Theſe Works; and Who is not to be mention'd, without particular Honour, in This Houſe, which acknowledges him for Her Pious and Munificent Founder.

I cannot but obſerve to You here, that it was the *Ruling* Part of This Great *City*, with a Good *Biſhop of London*, and *Martyr* for the Proteſtant Religion, at the Head of 'em, that Together ſtirr'd up that Young Prince to ſet upon ſo publick-ſpirited a Deſign. And it is natural for me alſo at the ſame Time to wiſh, that That Honourable Body may thus heartily always continue to join Their Endeavours and Intereſts with Thoſe of Their *Right Reverend Dioceſan*, in promoting Publick Charities, and Publick Bleſſings of any kind, either in Church or State.

Indeed

Indeed it muſt always be remember'd, to the Honour of That *Great Body*, That as Her Foundations of Charity (ſuch as we are ſpeaking of) are larger, for ought I can find, than Thoſe of any Other City in the Chriſtian World; ſo They were All rais'd and endow'd, either directly by Her Own Members; or, if by Other Hands, yet at Her earneſt and importunate Suit. So that the Fabricks and Revenues of This Kind, that belong to Her, are not onely (as in Other Parts) the Uſeful Ornaments of the Place, but ſo many ſtanding Monuments alſo of the Great Piety, and Unparallell'd Bounty of Her Anceſtours. It was *They* who ſollicited the Cauſe of the Poor and the Infirm, the Lame and Wounded, the Vagrant and Lunatick, with ſo particular an Induſtry and Zeal, as had thoſe Great and Bleſſed Effects, which we at This Day ſee and feel. A Zeal, never to be forgotten by *Men!* and which we hope *God* alſo will never forget! But, when he comes down to Viſit for the many Ill Effects of Wealth miſapplyed, will, for the *ſake* of it, Viſit in Mercy; and conſider the *Multitude of Her Charities* as well as *That* of Her *Sins*; Graciouſly allowing the One to be in ſome Meaſure a Cover to the Other!

But I have not Room to ſpeak of All Theſe Benefactions at large, and am call'd upon, by the Occaſion of this Preſent Aſſembly, to ſay ſomewhat more particularly of Thoſe of This Place.

I think it, by no means, a fit and decent thing to vye Charities, and to erect the Reputation of One upon the Ruines of That of another: This is, for the *ſake* of Charity to forget the True *Character*, and Eſſential *Properties* of it; which are, as St. *Paul* tells us, *to be kind*, and *not envy, not to vaunt it ſelf*, or *be puffed up, not to behave it ſelf unſeemly.* However, This, I think, I may ſay, with Modeſty and Truth, to the Advantage of That Charity to which we belong; That, though the Bottom of Wealth it ſtands on be not ſo Large as that of Others, yet is it in the Deſign of it ſo *Comprehenſive* and *Full*, as not any where, I think, to be parallell'd.

Here are Supplies to *Outward* Want and Neceſſity liberally imparted; The Poor and Fatherleſs, not only taken Care of, but ſo bred up, as to be able to be uſeful to the Commonwealth, and perhaps to take care of many Others. *Here* Idle, Uſeleſs, (and therefore Neceſſitous) Perſons are taught the Beſt of Leſſons, *Labour*; inur'd to it, and made acquainted with it; and then ſent out with ſuch a Stock of Induſtry, as will do 'em more real Service than any Other Kind of Benefaction, if They will but make uſe of it and improve it.

Here, Looſe Men and Women are reduc'd by wholſome Diſcipline, and Vagrants by Confinement: Puniſhment it ſelf is made an Inſtrument of Mercy and Goodneſs; and as Meat is in ſome meaſure provided for the Belly, ſo is there a Rod for the Back of Fools. This Particular Inſtance of Charity would deſerve to be enlarged on: It is a Noble and untrodden Subject; and may ask Your Patience, on ſome Other Occaſion: But the Time to which I am confin'd, is now almoſt run out; and there are yet Other Inſtances behind to be Inſiſted on. For

Here, not only *External Neceſſities* are relieved, but *Inward Wants* alſo are ſupply'd; not Ill Manners only are outwardly corrected, but Ill Diſpoſitions alſo are better'd, Ill Minds reform'd. And One ſingle Inſtance in this kind is not confin'd to the Perſon that receives the Benefit, but is a Real Piece of Service to an whole Community. It puts a ſtop to a ſpreading Plague; nay, it gets Ground upon it, by making Thoſe, who have had the Infection, turn Phyſicians to Others, by their Example, and Future Good Manners.

Nay, *Here*, Men recover their Underſtandings as well as Their Vertues; that is, They recover Their *Very Selves*; and are made once again Members of the Rational Creation, able to See and Know their Duty, and to Guide themſelves by that Knowledge of it; to pay once again their Rational Service to God, and to maintain a Civil Intercourſe with Men.

And, on this Particular Head, that *Worthy and Learned Perſon*,

Perſon, deſerves a Grateful mention, who has, by his Eminent Skill aſſiſted the Hoſpital to be Charitable in This Way, to much greater Numbers of *Lunaticks*, than have been known to be Cur'd in Former Times.

So that this Great Receptacle of Miſerable Objects of every kind, ſeems to be like that Medicinal Pool at *Bethesda*, where there were Vertues proper for every Malady, all Infirmities were equally Cur'd in Thoſe who had the Happineſs to get into it. I can carry the Parallel no further, I thank God,—— For the Prudence and Vigilance of its Governours, as it hitherto *has*, ſo, I queſtion not, always *will* take Care, that (Contrary to what happen'd to the Impotent Man in That Story) They who have *moſt need* of the *Pool*, ſhall ever have the Happineſs to get *firſt* into it. Impartiality is the Soul of Mercy as well as Juſtice; and adds Further Degrees of Uſe and Beauty to the moſt Uſeful and Beautiful Thing in the World.

To give You therefore the true Character of This Great Benefaction, in little----Charity is That which comprizes almoſt all Kinds of Vertues; and This Foundation, That, which takes in almoſt all Sorts of Charities!

But tho' all the Chief kinds of Beneficence are here purſu'd, yet many Miſerable Objects in Each Kind are not poſſible to be reach'd, with that preſent Stock of Charity, which belongs either to This Hoſpital, or to all Her Other Rivals in This Labour of Love, put together. God open the Hands of the Rich, and direct the Hearts of the Merciful, to build upon the Foundation Their Forefathers have laid; and to ſupply what is wanting, to compleat *Their* Deſigns: Approving Themſelves Thus, the True Heirs of their Piety and Bounty, as well as of their Wealth: Elſe, Theſe Great Buildings and Endowments of Theirs, like the Vertuous Acts and Atchievements of the Firſt Founders of Noble Families, will become a Reproach, rather than be an Honour, to a Degenerate and Worthleſs Poſterity.

Conſider with Your ſelves how God has bleſt this City for the

the *ſake* of the mighty Works that have been done in Her—I ſay, for the *ſake* of 'em.—For let a Man carry his Thoughts back to that Time, when theſe Good Deſigns were firſt ſet a-foot and fram'd, and He ſhall find that from Thence the Riſe and Growth of This City in Trade, Wealth, Intereſt, and Greatneſs, is preciſely to be dated.

May it grow on in the ſame Proportion! and by the ſame Means alſo! That is, May there ſtill be found ſuch a Number of Charitable Perſons in it, as will Continue the Character that has hitherto belong'd to it; and by That means ſecure the Continuation of God's Bleſſings upon it. May Charity go on *to have its Perfect Work*, not Living meerly upon the *Old Stock*, not continuing at a ſtay, but Growing and Increaſing ſtill, as the Neceſſities of Some Men increaſe, and the Abilities of Others to Relieve 'em! And thus ſpreading it ſelf to a wider Compaſs, it ſhall aſſuredly alſo procure a Greater Share of God's Mercies, and cover a greater Multitude of Our Sins.

That This may be the Caſe, the Good and Merciful God grant, through the Great Steward and Diſpenſer of his Mercies, Chriſt the Righteous! *To whom with the Father, and the Holy Ghoſt, be aſcrib'd, as is moſt due, all Honour, Adoration, and Praiſe; Now and Ever! Amen!*

FINIS.

284508